

# Are you worried about being evicted?

© Office of Massachusetts Attorney General Maura Healey

## **EVICCTIONS IN MASSACHUSETTS MUST BE COURT ORDERED.**

You do not need to leave just because your landlord tells you to leave or gives you a notice to quit. If your landlord files in court, you will receive a summons from the court and you are not required to leave until a court orders it.

## **A LANDLORD CAN'T THROW YOU OUT WITHOUT A COURT ORDER.**

Your landlord cannot:

- move your belongings out of your apartment,
- change your locks,
- shut off your utilities, or
- interfere with your use of the unit without permission from the court.

If your landlord has done or threatens to do any of the above, you can call the Attorney General's Office at (617) 727-8400.

## **YOU CAN APPLY FOR FINANCIAL HELP.**

You can apply for Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT) and Emergency Rental and Mortgage Assistance (ERMA) on the same form.

RAFT provides up to \$10,000 in a 12-month period if you are unable to pay your rent or mortgage or if you need help paying other expenses to keep your housing or move to new housing. ERMA helps households which are behind on rent or mortgage, or at risk of falling behind on rent or mortgage, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and also provides up to \$10,000 in a 12-month period.

You cannot be evicted while a rental assistance application is pending.

Contact the Attorney General's Office at (617) 727-8400 if you need help filling out a rental assistance application form or online at [www.mass.gov/ago/consumercomplaint](http://www.mass.gov/ago/consumercomplaint).

## **YOUR LANDLORD CAN'T DISCRIMINATE AGAINST YOU FOR RECEIVING FINANCIAL HELP.**

Your landlord can't discriminate against you because you receive government benefits.

If your landlord refuses to accept RAFT or ERMA, or refuses to fill out their portion of the application, they may be violating Massachusetts law.

To report discrimination, call the Civil Rights Division at (617) 963-2917 or file a civil rights complaint at [www.mass.gov/ago/civilrightscomplaint](http://www.mass.gov/ago/civilrightscomplaint).

## **IF YOU HAVE A COURT DATE FOR AN EVICTION HEARING.**

You can raise defenses to prevent your eviction. Some examples of defenses include:

- There are serious problems with the condition of your home;
- Your landlord did not give you the written notice required;
- If your landlord is retaliating against you for exercising your rights or discriminating against you;
- You have a rental assistance application pending.

You also have a right to ask to stay in your home until March 31, 2021 under the [Centers for Disease Prevention and Control \(CDC\) eviction moratorium](#).

There may be free legal help available to you:

- Legal services lawyers may be able to assist if you cannot afford a lawyer. Visit [evictionlegalhelp.org](http://evictionlegalhelp.org) for more information.
- There are volunteer lawyers available in Housing Court to help you through the Lawyer for the Day program.
- If you have a hearing, tell the judge or the mediator right away that you would like to speak to a lawyer.
- The Court Service Centers can help explain the court process and help you fill out basic court documents to respond to a summons and complaint.

The Attorney General's Office will be funding sites across Massachusetts where tenants and landlords can use computers to attend their virtual hearings. The full list will be posted on [www.mass.gov/ago/covid19](http://www.mass.gov/ago/covid19) or tenants can call (617) 727-8400 for more information.